

Accountability Report Transmittal Form

Agency Name: **South Carolina Forestry Commission**

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South Carolina Forestry Commission
Annual Accountability Report
Fiscal Year 2003 – 2004

SECTION I – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. *Agency Mission and Values:*

The mission of the SCFC is to protect, promote, enhance, and nurture the forestlands of South Carolina, and educate the public about forestry issues, in a manner consistent with achieving the greatest good for its citizens.

The SCFC values:

- Customer Service and Satisfaction
- Professionalism and Pride in Quality Work
- Honesty, Integrity and Treating Employees with Respect and Trust
- Employee Accountability
- Teamwork
- Open Communications

2. *Major achievements from past year.*

- **Evaluated/Strengthened the Law Enforcement Program** – Legislation was passed broadening the duties of SCFC Law Enforcement Officers, as well as clarifying and strengthening timber theft/fraud penalties; reassigned personnel based on performance /interests; enhanced training capabilities by acquiring satellite link to ETV; began participation in SLED/FBI Uniform Crime Reporting program.
- **Fire Program Review** - With changing demographics and the increasing threat of wildfire to life and property in the state's growing wild-land urban interface, the downsizing of the SCFC during the past four years, and in keeping with efforts to continually assess agency programs, the State Forester named an external team to conduct a review of the agency's fire program. The review provided a fresh focus for the fire program, with the team identifying potential future challenges, as well as program strengths and opportunities for improvement.
- **Computer Aided Dispatch System Update** – With funding from a National Fire Plan grant, initiated the process of upgrading the SCFC's computer aided dispatch system. A contract was awarded and work began to install a commercial, off-the-shelf, computer aided dispatch system to replace a custom developed application installed in 1996. The new system will incorporate standard 911 dispatch functions and features, improve efficiency in dispatch operations, reduce training time, improve response times to wildfires, and comply with the State CIO's South Carolina Enterprise Architecture (SCEA) technical standards.
- **Wee Tee State Forest** – Acquired 12,000 acres of bottom land hardwood forests in Williamsburg County through Forest Legacy Partnership with the US Forest Service, Department of Natural Resources, and various conservation organizations. The property will be managed as a part of the SCFC's self-supporting, sustained yield, multiple-use state forest system.

- **State Forest Long Range Plan** – Implementation of the long-range plan for the state forest system was initiated, focusing on the development of forest modeling capabilities; strategies and needs for acquiring this capability were identified, with an RFP being issued. Management of the state forest system continues to be for sustainable, multiple use benefits under long-range goals encompassing environmental protection, educational outreach, local and state economic development, and forest based recreation.
- **State Forest Recreation Advisory Committees** – Recreational advisory committees were formed at three state forests, with the committees operating under guidelines developed by a statewide Recreational Advisory Council. The committees assist each forest in implementing recreational use guidelines, as well as provide assistance in trail construction and maintenance. Notably, the Harbison State Forest Committee formed a non-profit organization known as Friends of Harbison. This group established a board of directors, elected officers, and developed a set of by-laws. Their mission is to “preserve and promote Harbison State Forest as a recreational and educational urban forest”.
- **Forest Resource Development** – The SCFC continued to provide the only up-to-date, accurate data on South Carolina’s forest resource through the forest inventory analysis program. South Carolina’s full forest inventory data is currently available online and the comprehensive report is scheduled for release by fall 2004. (Graph 7.2-2) The data is utilized in developing or expanding sustainable markets for forest products to benefit forest landowners, forest industry, and the state’s economy. Nine active projects during the year were focused on developing new markets for forest products: a major emphasis was in the development of biomass energy capacity by SC’s utilities. The SCFC also is actively participating in the SC Competitiveness Initiative.

3. ***Key strategic goals for present and future years:***

- Continue to assess and restructure the workforce at its basic level in response to the changing needs and desires of constituents/customers.
- Maintain an effective, well-trained, well-equipped, and diverse workforce.
- Improve the effectiveness of internal communications.
- Raise the awareness among the public and decision-makers of the economic, environmental, and social benefits of a well managed, healthy forest resource.
- Collect and provide the basic data needed to assess the forest resource and its condition, as well as the potential for the development or expansion of sustainable markets for forest products in support of SC’s Competitiveness Initiative.
- Protect life, property, and the forest resource from the increasing threat of wildfire and other hazards as the population expands into forested areas.
- Provide technical advice and direct assistance to private landowners and communities.

4. ***Opportunities and barriers that may affect the agency’s success in fulfilling its mission and achieving its strategic goals. (This establishes the basis for the agency’s budget request.)***

Opportunities:

- Increasing public interest in the need for green space and interest in the health and productivity of that space amplify the need to better educate people about the environmental, social, and economic benefits of a well-managed, healthy forest.

- New and/or not previously served forest landowners need technical forestry advice and assistance.
- Communities, especially those communities located within the wildland-urban interface, need assistance with fire prevention and community forestry plans.
- All of the above activities underscore the need to continuously collect and provide data to assess the State's forest resource and its condition.
- Funding of the South Carolina Conservation Bank Trust Fund provides an opportunity for the State to increase its forest land holdings. Managed by the SCFC these forestlands can be self-supporting, demonstrating sustained yield and multiple-use principles.
- With the increasing demands on the forest resource to provide clean water, and in light of growing urbanization into forested areas, the SCFC has an increased opportunity to work cooperatively with other agencies, organizations, and private industries in the promotion of and training in the use of forestry best management practices to protect water quality.
- Increasing value of the forest resource has created the need for highly specialized law enforcement to protect vulnerable landowners from unscrupulous timber buyers, as well as outright theft.
- Homeland security issues and the cross-utilization of multiple agencies in emergency/disaster situations create opportunities for the SCFC to share its expertise/train other agencies in the Incident Command System and to provide incident command team members for emergency responses.
- Increasing need for alternative energy sources provides an opportunity for SCFC to become a leader in promoting energy from forest biomass.

Barriers:

- Public demands for forestry services, including fire prevention and suppression, have increased as SCFC budget declined.
- Rising operating costs, especially rising fuel prices, are increasing the cost of detecting and suppressing wildland fire.
- Budget reductions have made it necessary to lengthen replacement schedules for firefighting equipment.
- Financial inability to keep pace with technological advances in equipment needed for mission critical functions.
- Loss of experienced personnel through retirements and attrition (28% vacancy factor), with over 40% of the current workforce eligible to retire during the next five years.
- More stringent employment requirements and mandated training for firefighters and dispatchers, coupled with very low starting salaries, make it difficult to hire and retain qualified personnel.
- Many essential FTEs are partly or entirely funded by short-term federal grants.
- Loss of cooperator (forest industry) firefighter capacity due to sale of forest industry lands and subsequent reductions in personnel and equipment.

- County forestry boards' role in management of local personnel hampers the agency's ability to change structure of the agency to meet current needs. This role, specified by law, needs to be changed.
- Expanding population into rural areas contributes to the fragmentation of the forest resource and creates an increased risk of fire to structures built in those areas.
- The state's changing demographic and the fragmentation of forest ownership have created a large number of new forest landowners without a rural background who lack an understanding of the basic management techniques needed to keep their forest lands healthy and productive.

5. *How the accountability report is used to improve organizational performance:*

The accountability report is utilized by the SCFC to monitor established performance measures, to update or establish benchmarks, and to document continuous improvement efforts. The report also is tied directly to the agency's strategic plan and serves as an annual progress report on the implementation/status of many goals and action items in the plan.

SECTION II – BUSINESS OVERVIEW

1. *Number of employees:*

The Forestry Commission is authorized to employ personnel utilizing 493 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs). The agency currently employs 356 people with a 28% vacancy factor. This is the largest number of vacancies the agency has ever carried.

2. *Operation locations:*

Personnel are assigned positions throughout the state through a series of zone, unit, regional, and headquarter offices. The largest single group of employees, forest fire wardens, reports directly from their residences in responding to wildland fires. Regional administrative and support offices are located in Newberry, Florence, and Walterboro. Central emergency dispatch centers are co-located at the regional office sites. A forest seedling nursery is located in Edgefield County, and a forest seed orchard is located in Jasper County. Major property holdings include Manchester State Forest near Wedgefield, Sand Hills State Forest near Patrick, Harbison State Forest near Columbia, Poe Creek State Forest near Pickens, and Wee Tee State Forest in Williamsburg County.

3. *Expenditures/Appropriations Chart:*

Accountability Report Appropriations/Expenditures Base Budget Expenditures and Appropriations

	02-03 Actual Expenditures		03-04 Actual Expenditures		04-05 Appropriations Act	
Major Budget Categories	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds	Total Funds	General Funds
Personal Service	\$11,644,413	\$9,596,923	\$10,440,694	\$8,401,019	\$9,132,578	\$6,639,691
Other Operating	\$5,734,952	\$2,972,172	\$5,247,429	\$3,012,432	\$6,125,151	\$2,803,633
Special Items	\$898,284	\$230,000	\$780,727	\$200,000	\$752,596	\$200,000
Permanent Improvements	\$617,250	\$1,000			\$0	\$0
Case Services						
Distributions to Subdivisions	\$783,835	\$0	\$1,087,855	\$0	\$1,557,500	\$0
Fringe Benefits	\$3,992,518	\$3,372,391	\$3,641,160	\$3,044,301	\$3,364,842	\$2,548,534
Non-recurring	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0		
TOTAL	\$23,671,252	\$16,172,485	\$21,197,865	\$14,657,753	\$20,932,667	\$12,191,848

Other Expenditures

Sources of Funds	02-03 Actual Expenditures	03-04 Actual Expenditures
Supplemental Bills	\$0	\$0
Capital Reserve Fund	\$0	\$0
Bonds	\$0	\$0

4. Major Program Areas Chart:

Major Program Areas				
Program Number and Title	Major Program Area Purpose (Brief)	FY 02-03 Budget Expenditures	FY 03-04 Budget Expenditures	Key Cross Reference for Financial Results*
II Forest Landowners Assistance	<u>Forest Protection</u> To ensure their future health, South Carolina's forests must be protected from harm to include fire, disease, pests and other natural and human-caused factors.	State: 12,259,608 Federal: 1,595,771 Other: 912,020 Total: 14,767,399 % of Total Budget: 62%	State: 10,697,370 Federal: 2,009,173 Other: 243,093 Total: 12,949,636 % of Total Budget: 61%	7.3-1 7.3-2
II Forest Landowners Assistance	<u>Forest Management</u> The South Carolina Forestry Commission delivers financial and technical assistance to forest landowners, communities and the public while addressing social, economical and environmental concerns.	State: 1,389,984 Federal: 1,051,144 Other: 1,148,732 Total: 3,589,860 % of Total Budget: 15%	State: 1,096,568 Federal: 1,446,138 Other: 861,570 Total: 3,404,276 % of Total Budget: 16%	7.3-1 7.3-2
III State Forests	<u>State Forests</u> Management, development and protection of timber, wildlife and endangered species and other resources. An ample productive forest land base and an economic climate conducive to forestry based business are essential if forest landowners of South Carolina are to practice sustainable forest management.	State: 551,164 Federal: 14,193 Other: 1,316,489 Total: 1,881,846 % of Total Budget: 8%	State: 886,319 Federal: 33,997 Other: 838,618 Total: 1,758,934 % of Total Budget: 8%	7.3-1 7.3-2
		State: Federal: Other: Total: % of Total Budget:	State: Federal: Other: Total: % of Total Budget:	

Below: List any programs not included above and show the remainder of expenditures by source of funds.

Remainder of Expenditures	State: 1,971,730	State: 1,977,495
Forest Health	Federal: 610,133	Federal: 665,900
Law Enforcement	Other: 850,285	Other: 568,642
Resource Development	Total: 3,432,148	Total: 3,212,037
Nurseries and Tree Improvement	% of Total Budget: 15%	% of Total Budget: 15%
Forest Information & Outreach		
Administration		

*Key Cross-References are a link to the Category 7 – Business Results. These References provide a Chart number that is included in the 7th section of this document.

5. **Key Customers:**

- Owners and users of forestland
- City and county fire and emergency services
- Rural-Urban interface residents and interest groups
- Forest industry
- State forests visitors and user groups
- Urban residents and businesses
- Earth science teachers and students

Major products and services with links to Key Customers:

The major products and services of the Forestry Commission are authorized and required by the South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 48-23-90, *General duties of Commission*.

Protect the Resource

Key Customers:

- Owners and users of forestland
- Forest industry
- City and county fire and emergency services
- State forests visitors and user groups
- Rural-Urban interface residents and interest groups

The Forestry Commission has a statewide wildfire prevention, detection and control network in place. According to the South Carolina Code of Laws, "It shall take and afford such organized means as may be necessary to prevent, control and extinguish fires, including the enforcement of any and all laws pertaining to the protection of the forests and woodlands in the State."

Commission personnel construct firebreaks on privately owned forest lands to suppress fires and reduce the potential for destructive forest fire. To further minimize the effect of wildfire and smoke hazards, Commission foresters prepare prescribed burning plans for property owners and assist with conducting burns to reduce hazardous fuels, improve wildlife habitat, and prepare sites for reforestation.

Using National Fire Prevention funds, the South Carolina Forestry Commission has established numerous project areas around the state to assess the dangers from wildland fire to communities. Working in cooperation with local fire services, local governments, and various business and civic groups, the Forestry Commission is in the process of developing Community Fire Wise Plans for interface communities with a very high or high risk to destruction from wildland fire. These Fire Wise Plans will be used to educate wildland urban interface communities as to how they can reduce the threat of wildland fire to their lives and property.

The Commission periodically surveys the state for forest insect and disease infestations. Because the Commission's central office has an entomologist working from a fully equipped diagnostic lab, foresters have access to up-to-date information about local problems and measures for control. The Southern Pine Beetle outbreak, which was responsible for \$255 million in mortality in 2002, declined significantly in 2003. (Graph 7.2-8) Although losses continued through 2003, they were at a much lower level than earlier in the outbreak; salvage of damaged wood was at an all time recorded high of approximately 70%. (Graph 7.2-9)

The Law Enforcement Program provides fire prevention through the enforcement of state fire laws and strives to reduce arson and forest product theft and fraud. The agency has 36 commissioned officers, including 4 full-time investigators. In addition to enforcing outdoor burning regulations, agents handled a dramatic 66% increase in timber theft/fraud cases during the year. (Graph 7.2-5) The SCFC's Law Enforcement Program serves as a benchmark for our neighboring states that are not actively investigating timber theft cases.

The Forestry Commission is the designated agency in South Carolina to provide public oversight and guidance for technical forest management practices. The agency has established approved Best Management Practices (BMPs) and monitors compliance with BMP guidelines routinely. BMP Foresters located in each of the three operating regions of South Carolina offer courtesy BMP exams to landowners, foresters, and timber buyers. The BMP Forester makes site-specific BMP recommendations to follow while conducting forestry activities. During the 03-04 fiscal year, the BMP Foresters completed 467 courtesy exams. Of the 467 sites, 462 (98.9%) were completed in compliance with our recommended guidelines.

Manage the Resource

Key Customers:

- Owners and users of forestland
- Rural-Urban interface residents and interest groups
- State forests visitors and user groups
- Urban residents and businesses
- Earth science teachers and students

Commission foresters, working throughout the state, examine woodlands at the request of the landowner, with an emphasis on assisting new landowners and landowners that previously have not utilized the assistance of a professional forester. According to the South Carolina Code of Laws, "It shall give such advice, assistance and cooperation as may be practical to private owners of land ..."

Based on the utilization of the land, the forester writes a woodland management plan tailored to the specific needs of that property. The plan includes descriptions of each forest stand, recommended practices to meet the objectives of the landowner, and a property map. The plan also includes suggestions on how to accomplish recommended work.

Prescribed burning services and timber marking services are offered for a fee.

There are several financial assistance options available to help landowners complete forestry improvement projects. Commission foresters determine whether or not a landowner qualifies for assistance and then assist with the application process and implementation of the practice.

To assist the state's woodland owners with reforestation, the Commission sells bare root and containerized seedlings. Native pine and hardwood species are available. The SCFC nursery program operates on the receipts from seedling and seed sales.

The Commission manages Sand Hills, Manchester, Harbison, Poe Creek and Wee Tee State Forests on a self-supporting basis for sustainable, multiple-use forestry and public education purposes.

All employees of the Forestry Commission are committed to forest conservation education. Civic and social groups, scouts, science teachers and environmental organizations request programs on forestry and related environmental subjects.

As our urban areas expand, the importance of growing and maintaining healthy trees in city spaces will increase. Foresters work with urban residents, city planners, developers, contractors and local government to improve the quality of our urban environments.

Raise Awareness about the Resource

Key Customers:

- Owners and users of forestland
- Earth science teachers and students
- City and county fire and emergency services
- Regional and county development boards
- Rural-Urban interface residents and interest groups
- State forests visitors and user groups
- Urban residents and businesses

The Forestry Commission is responsible for educating the public on the economic and environmental benefits of a well-managed forest resource. According to the South Carolina Code of Laws “It shall ... promote... a proper appreciation by the public of the advantages of forestry and the benefits to be derived from forest culture and preservation.”

The Environmental Education Program has been decimated by budget cuts and loss of dedicated personnel due to retirements and internal restructuring. However, Forestry Commission employees on the state forests and in the Education & Information Technology Division support the agency’s popular Wood Magic and Teachers Tour programs and produce technical and general informational materials on forestry and forest-related subjects. (Graph 7.2-10)

6. *Key Stakeholders (other than customers):*

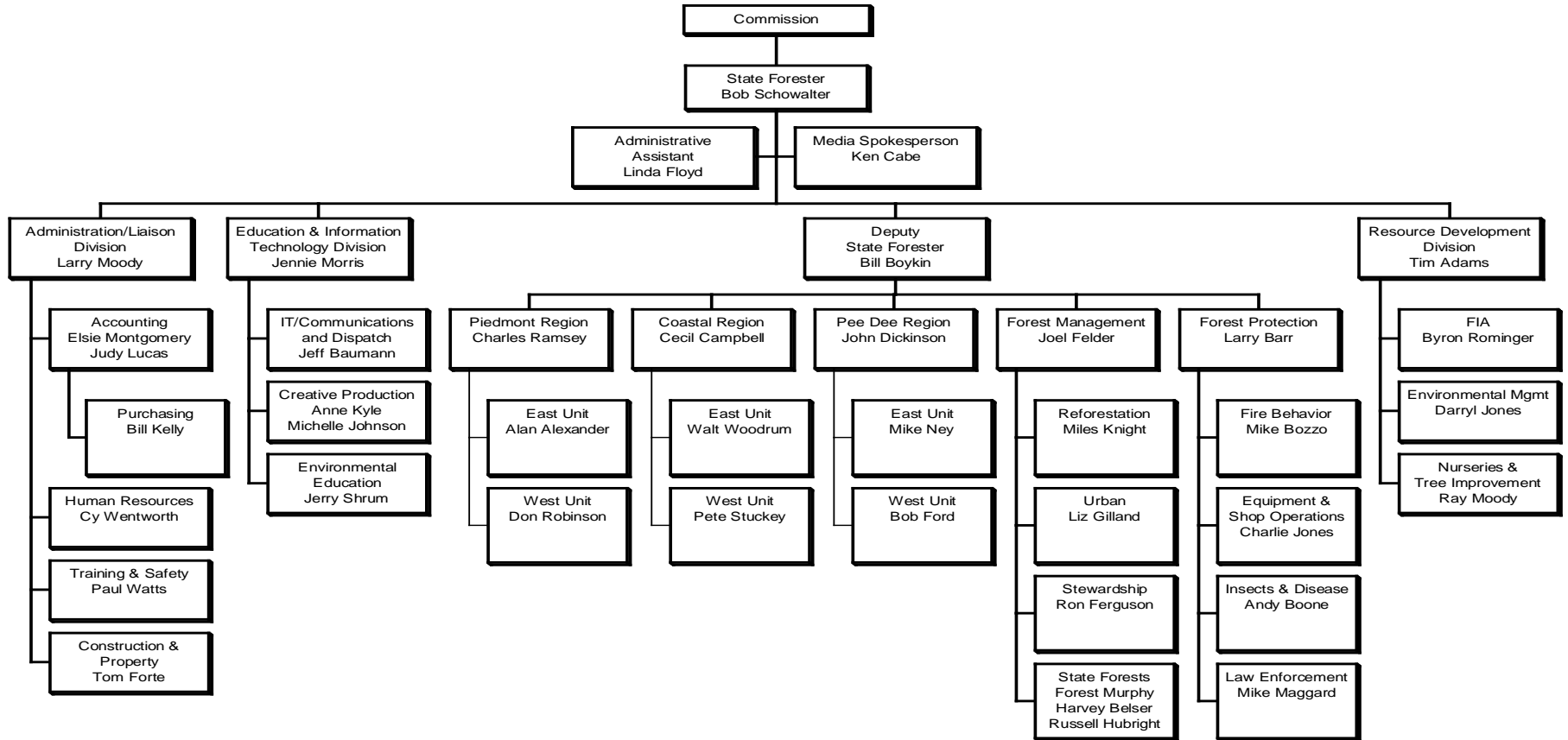
- Employees
- Commissioners
- County Forestry Boards
- Local governments: county and city councils
- State Legislative members
- State of South Carolina
- State and Federal Agencies such as DHEC, US Forest Service and US Environmental Protection Agency

7. *Key suppliers:*

Vehicle equipment manufacturers, heavy equipment manufacturers and dealers, federal excess property inventory system, vehicle repair garages and parts suppliers, communication equipment dealers and repair businesses, forestry equipment suppliers, office supply vendors, printing businesses and media outlets, and aerial detection contractors.

8. *Organizational Structure Chart:*

South Carolina Forestry Commission Organizational Chart



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SECTION III – ELEMENTS OF MALCOLM BALDRIGE AWARD CRITERIA

CATEGORY I - LEADERSHIP

1. How do senior leaders set, deploy and ensure two-way communication for:

1.1a Short and long term direction?

Senior leaders (agency director, his staff, and division directors) develop short and long term directions with input from the Commissioners' Long Range Planning Committee, stakeholders, customers, field and program leadership, employees, the Executive & Legislative branches of government, and by monitoring and projecting issues and trends that impact forestry and forest resources. Input is obtained through stakeholder and employee meetings, customer surveys, and participation in relevant committees/professional organizations.

Deployment and communication are achieved through the strategic and action plans, the performance evaluation process, weekly news bulletins, and through meetings scheduled with employees, customers, and stakeholders. The agency director continued to meet with employee and other groups during the year to provide information on agency direction and receive feedback.

1.1b Performance expectations?

Performance expectations are determined through one or more of the following: review of past organizational performance, review of other organizations' performances, input from employees primarily responsible for carrying out/monitoring the program, and feedback from customers.

Performance expectations are deployed and communicated through the strategic and action plans, the performance review planning process, and follow-up meetings/discussions. Commitment and performance are achieved and supported through periodic and on-going reviews of expectations and progress.

1.1c Organizational values?

Agency leadership adopted organizational values as identified by employees at an agency-wide planning conference. Senior management recognizes the importance of reviewing and discussing organizational values with employees, as well as prospective employees, and strives to deploy and communicate agency values by modeling.

1.1d Empowerment and innovation?

Agency leadership has worked to strengthen and broaden efforts toward empowerment and innovation. Section, program, and operational staff are encouraged to identify opportunities and barriers relevant to accomplishing agency and program goals. Leadership strives to promote intra- and inter-departmental cooperation through regularly scheduled informational sharing meetings.

Also, the state forest recreational advisory council, chartered by the agency director last year, completed work on identifying opportunities, issues and solutions related to recreational uses on the state forests and developed a set of recreational use guidelines. The council's work has been incorporated into the state forests system long-range plan. Local advisory councils have been established for three state forests.

1.1e Organizational and employee learning?

Organizational and employee learning is primarily set, deployed, and communicated through an established training council which consists of employee representatives from each region and various program staff. Leadership actively supports the efforts of the training council, in identifying, evaluating, prioritizing, and implementing internal training. During the year the training council re-evaluated various positions' training needs based on the agency's reorganization/realignment and updated employees' training guides accordingly. The SCFC continued its commitment to growing future agency leaders, enrolling two new candidates in the Certified Public Manager program.

1.1f Ethical behavior?

Agency leadership sets, deploys, and communicates ethical expectations through the agency's values, as well as through various policies and procedures and professional organizations. Employees violating ethical principles are dealt with through appropriate individual means.

1.2 How do senior leaders establish and promote a focus on customers and other stakeholders?

Senior leaders have established and promoted a customer focus through the agency's mission statement and strategic and action plans. The agency intentionally seeks customer feedback and input on various services and issues: seedlings sales, services work, technical forest management assistance, changes in timber theft and fraud legislation, notification of wildfires, and recreational uses of state forests through users' advisory councils. This input is obtained through customer surveys, meetings (external and internal), and focus groups.

1.3 How do senior leaders maintain fiscal, legal, and regulatory accountability?

Fiscal, legal and regulatory accountability is maintained through the use of policies, procedures, and internal and external controls. Controls are in place to maintain a separation of duties in the fiscal area. This, along with the use of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAPP), insures fiscal responsibility and eliminates opportunity for fraud. Monthly reviews of budget status in relation to appropriations and adherence to the State Procurement Codes sustain legal accountability. Use of the State Attorney General's Office and private attorneys to deal with Human Resource complaints, lawsuits or other legal and regulatory issues insure accountability. Audits and reviews by the State Auditor's Office and the U.S. Forest Service are conducted on a regular basis to insure compliance with State and Federal laws, rules and regulations.

1.4 What key performance measures are regularly reviewed by your senior leaders?

- Customer satisfaction levels for forest tree seedlings, forestry assistance, & services (Graph 7.1-1; 7.1-2; 7.1-3 respectively)
- Forest based economic development impact (Graph 7.2-1)
- Forest Inventory Analysis Productivity (Graph 7.2-2)
- Fire response times and Southern states average fire sizes (Graph 7.2-3; 7.2-4 respectively)
- Timber theft recovery rates (Graph 7.2-5)
- Law Enforcement Investigations/Prosecutions (Graph 7.2-6)
- Best management practices compliance trends (Graph 7.2-7)
- Southern Pine Beetle losses/salvage (Graph 7.2-8; 7.2-9 respectively)
- Raise the Awareness About the Resource (Graph 7.2-10)
- Financial (Graph 7.3-1; 7.3-2; 7.3-3; 7.3-4)
- Employee turnover rates/experience lost, satisfaction (Graph 7.4-1; 7.4-2)
- Health and Safety (Graph 7.4-3)

1.5 How do senior leaders use organizational performance review findings and employee feedback to improve their own leadership effectiveness and the effectiveness of management throughout the organization?

Senior leaders discuss and use employee feedback and organizational reviews to determine if leadership/management is:

- adequately communicating direction and priorities to employees
- identifying and removing barriers that may hinder employees performance
- setting realistic performance expectations
- needing to modify or change priorities

In a continuing effort to improve communications, the agency director conducted several employee meetings in the field and headquarters during the year to share information and obtain feedback. Also, the SCFC received input/feedback from various formal reviews during the year: the US Forest Service provided input through its periodic Cooperative Management Review; the Nursery Program obtained a grant to conduct a review/analysis of the program and its processes; the agency director formed a team of outside professionals which reviewed and identified opportunities/challenges facing the agency's fire management program.

1.6 How does the organization address the current and potential impact on the public of its products, programs, services, facilities and operations, including associated risks?

Current and potential impacts are identified by seeking employee, customer, public, partner, legal, financial, and other input/feedback.

1.7 How does senior leadership set and communicate key organizational priorities for improvement?

Senior leadership sets key priorities for improvement by reviewing input and feedback from internal and external customers, reviewing available performance data and benchmarks, and noting trends in forestry and government. Priority items may be included in the strategic and action plans.

Priorities are communicated by meeting with internal and external customers, the performance review process, and the agency's weekly news bulletins. Key priorities were discussed by the agency director during employee and other meetings conducted this year.

1.8 How does senior leadership actively support and strengthen the community?

Leadership and the agency support and strengthen the community by encouraging participation in leadership roles in professional and community organizations and associations. The agency director currently serves as the chairperson of the Southern Group of State Foresters and on several committees of the National Association of State Foresters. SCFC employees routinely provide advice and assistance, as well as training and grant opportunities to communities, organizations and local governments, especially through the agency's community forestry program, cooperation with rural and volunteer fire departments, and reforestation efforts. Employees' involvement includes participation in and support of local fire, law enforcement, and forestry associations; participation in the United Way, Camp Kemo, Red Cross blood drives, various walk & bike-a-thons, Good Health Appeal, United Black Fund, the Salvation Army, fishing rodeos, state forests and state park events, as well as festivals in towns, cities, and communities.

CATEGORY 2 - STRATEGIC PLANNING

2.1 *What is your Strategic Planning process, including KEY participants, and how does it account for:*

- a. Customer needs and expectations***
- b. Financial, regulatory, societal, and other risks***
- c. Human resource capabilities and needs***
- d. Operational capabilities and needs***
- e. Supplier/contractor/partner capabilities and needs***

The Forestry Commission's strategic planning process involves collecting input and data from agency Commissioners, employees, customers, cooperators, and the public. Information/data is analyzed and its content verified, like issues consolidated, strategies identified, the plan developed and disseminated, with reviews and updates occurring as the plan is carried out.

As the plan has been reviewed and revised, efforts have been undertaken to more closely align the plan with the EPMS process and the Malcolm Baldrige National Award Criteria.

2.1a *Customer needs and expectations?*

The strategic plan indicates that customers' needs and expectations will be sought through surveys, focus groups, individual interviews, and monitoring of complaints. Input from customers is a primary basis for developing action items in the plan. The agency conducts on-going customer surveys on seedling sales, forest management plan development and forestry services for private landowners, and has established local recreational advisory committees that meet regularly on three state forests.

2.1b *Financial, regulator, societal and other risks?*

Specific financial, societal, or other risks are addressed in individual action items in the strategic plan; this includes reviewing the agency's financial and staffing levels and needs.

2.1c *Human resource capabilities and needs?*

The strategic plan reflects the agency's intent to plan effectively for the use of human resources, with a strong emphasis on training and safety for firefighters and foresters. In response to the continuing budget reductions and vacancies created through the offering of Retirement Incentives and Voluntary Separation Programs, the Forestry Commission reviewed its structure, programs, and staffing levels, and reorganized and realigned the workforce. Efforts are being focused on developing a stronger cross-functional workforce in the performance of forest protection and management services.

2.1d *Operational capabilities and needs?*

Action items within the strategic plan specify that various capabilities/processes will be examined through internal audits or reviews. Specific items examined during the year included the Forestry Commission's fire program and nursery and tree improvement program by external review teams. An internal review of the law enforcement program was also completed. Efforts are continuing to examine additional work processes and to identify key performance measures.

2.1e *Supplier/contractor partner capabilities and needs?*

Major contractor and partner needs and capabilities are covered in specific action items, with a focus on strengthening working relationships by improving mutual understandings of needs and capabilities.

2.2 *What are your key strategic objectives?*

The agency's five key objectives are as follows:

1. **Protect the Resource** – To ensure their future health, South Carolina's forests must be protected from harm due to natural and human-caused factors.
2. **Raise Awareness about the Resource** – We must raise awareness among decision-makers and the public in general concerning the environmental, social, and economic benefits of sound forest management.
3. **Manage the Resource** – Forest landowners, communities, and the public expect the South Carolina Forestry Commission to deliver financial and technical assistance while addressing social and environmental concerns.
4. **Enhance the Resource** – An ample, productive forestland base and an economic climate conducive to forestry-based business are essential if forest landowners of South Carolina are to practice sustainable forest management.
5. **Prepare to Meet Future Demands** – To meet future demands and provide quality customer service, the South Carolina Forestry Commission must have well-trained, qualified staff that enjoy a safe and rewarding work environment.

2.3 *How do you develop and track action plans that address your key strategic objectives?*

Action items were identified for each goal in the strategic plan and were included in the plan. Agency leaders and program managers further identified steps needed to achieve the action items and the personnel involved. These action items have been included in specific employees' EPMS planning stages, with managers and supervisors responsible for tracking progress.

2.4 *What are your key action plans/initiatives?*

To Protect the Resource, the SCFC will:

1. Evaluate fire protection strategies and priorities as urban development into forested areas creates additional hazards.
2. Increase law enforcement services in wildfire and forest product theft and fraud arenas.
3. Re-evaluate programs to ensure prompt response to insect and disease outbreaks and concerns.
4. Evaluate programs to ensure protection of environmental functions, including air and water quality.
5. Increase contractor recognition of, and compliance with, BMPs.

To Raise the Awareness about the Resource, the SCFC will:

1. Develop and promote forestry education programs for all audiences.
2. Enhance its image as an initial source for forest management assistance in South Carolina.
3. Utilize current and available media to reach targeted audiences with relevant forestry information.
4. Significantly increase interaction, cooperation, and communication with other state agencies, local governments, forestry organizations, universities, professional societies, environmental and conservation groups.

To Manage the Resource, the SCFC will:

1. Provide improved land management services to landowners of South Carolina by being more responsive to the needs of our customers.

2. Administer federal and state cost-share reforestation programs and provide technical forest management assistance designed to meet landowner's goals.
3. Provide technical assistance and financial grants in urban and community forestry to local governments, non-profit organizations, other agencies, and individuals.
4. Use its landholdings to demonstrate innovative forest management techniques as well as for in-house training and applied research.
5. Provide landowners with optimum quality forest tree seedlings to meet needs not filled by the private sector.

To Enhance the Resource, the SCFC will:

1. Serve as a catalyst for promotion and sustainable development of the forest resource and forestry-related industry in the state.
2. Improve contacts and communication with state and local levels of government concerning forestry-related issues.
3. Provide policy makers, industry, and environmental groups accurate and timely information on the state's forest inventory and health of the forest.

To Prepare to Meet Future Demands, the SCFC will:

1. Strive to maintain a capable, satisfied and diverse work team.
2. Develop internal training programs to prepare employees to utilize emerging technologies as means to improve customer services.
3. Review staffing levels and organizational structure to ensure the agency is in a position to supply needed services.
4. Develop internal training programs for agency personnel to efficiently, safely, and professionally provide better land management services.
5. Establish goals and implement plans to reduce the number of job-related injuries.
6. Establish goals and implement vehicle and equipment operation safety training to reduce the number of accidents.
7. Develop plans to enhance professional development of SCFC personnel.

2.5 *How do you communicate and deploy your strategic objectives, action plans and performance measures?*

The agency's strategic plan is published on the SCFC website (see address below). All managers review and update strategic plan action items each year when performance appraisals are due. Employees are reminded of objectives, review performance measures, and discuss new action plans to improve performance measures with supervisors at that time.

2.6 *If the agency's strategic plan is available to the public through the agency's Internet homepage, please provide an address for that plan on the website.*

The web address for the agency's strategic plan is www.state.sc.us/forest/stratplan.htm.

2.7 Strategic Planning Chart:

Strategic Planning

Program Number and Title	Supported Agency Strategic Planning Goal/Objective	Related FY 03-04 Key Agency Action Plan/Initiative(s)	Key Cross References for Performance Measures*
II Forest Landowners Assistance Protection	Section III, Category 2, Question 2.2, #1. Protect the Resource	Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Protect the Resource #1 – 3 Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Raise the Awareness about the Resource, #4 Section III, Category 2, Questions 2.4, Prepare to Meet Future Demands, #1-3, 5-7	7.2-3, 7.2-4, 7.2-5, 7.2-6 7.2-8, 7.2-9 7.3-2, 7.3-4
II Forest Landowners Assistance Forest Mgt.	Section III, Category 2, Question 2.2, #2 - 5	Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Enhance the Resource, #2 Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Manage the Resource #1 – 4 Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Raise Awareness about the Resource, #2, #4 Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Prepare to Meet Future Demands #1 - 4	7.1-2, 7.1-3 7.1-2
III State Forests	Section III, Category 2, Question 2.2, #2 – 5	Section III, Category 2, Questions 2.4, Manage the Resource #4	
Other Programs	Section III, Category 2, Question 2.2, #1 – 5	Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Enhance the Resource, #1 – 3 Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Protect the Resource, #4, 5 Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Manage the Resource, #5 Section III, Category 2, Question 2.4, Raise Awareness about the Resource, #1 – 4 Section III, Category 2, Questions 2.4, Prepare to Meet Future Demands, #1 - 7	7.2-1, 7.2-2 7.2-7 7.1-1 7.2-10 7.3-1, 7.3-2, 7.3-3, 7.3-4 7.4-1, 7.4-2, 7.4-3

*Key Cross-References are a link to the Category 7 – Business Results. These References provide a Chart number that is included in the 7th section of this document.

CATEGORY 3 – CUSTOMER FOCUS

3.1 How do you determine who your customers are and what are their key requirements?

Our key customers were generally identified in the South Carolina Code of Laws, Section 48-23-90 *General Duties of Commission*. As our services and products have evolved over the years our customer base has expanded to include other non-traditional forestry customers. For example, urban populations have expanded into the more rural and forested areas of our state and we are responding to this population's need for assistance on their personal property, as well as providing information on their surrounding natural environment.

Our agency uses a variety of methods to determine requirements, expectations, preferences and satisfaction of customers and stakeholders:

- Customer Surveys
- Focus Groups
- Public Forums and Workshops
- Collaboration with Partners and User Groups
- Outreach Publications for Targeted Audiences
- Interviews
- County Forestry Board Meetings
- Monitoring of Legislative Activities

The Forestry Commission has conducted surveys of customers to determine their expectations and preferences. Survey forms soliciting feedback are sent to landowners that receive forest management assistance or services. Customers are asked about the length of time it took to complete the service, the results of the service, follow-up on the service, and courtesy and professionalism of the employees.

Each year, agency leadership also participates in meetings of county forestry boards to discuss current forestry issues and agency programs.

Federal grants dictate who we provide assistance to regarding Community Forestry, Best Management Practices, and the Wildland/Urban Interface.

Periodic mailings to new forest landowners, surveying their interests and needs help acquire new customers.

3.2 How do you keep your listening and learning methods current with changing customer/business needs?

The Forestry Commission seeks input and information through customer surveys and employee feedback, as well as through participation in a number of partnerships and councils. These include: SC State Government Improvement Network, Urban and Community Forestry Council, SC Statewide Outreach Council, Wildland Fire Protection Partnership, the Prescribed Fire Council, South Carolina Foresters Council, Southern Group of State Foresters, National Association of State Foresters, Emergency Management Division, South Carolina Forestry Association, many local landowner associations, professional organizations, and the South Carolina Firemen's Association.

3.3 *How do you use information from customers/stakeholders to keep services or programs relevant and provide for continuous improvement?*

Information about customer satisfaction and suggestions for improving services is reviewed by the senior leadership of the Forestry Commission and is disseminated to the appropriate program manager to improve the service or product. Regionally, this information is passed on to the area/unit and then to the county where the work is performed for improvement.

3.4 *How do you measure customer/stakeholder satisfaction?*

Customer satisfaction surveys for forest management plans, forest services, and forest tree seedlings are provided to customers for them to fill out and return in a self-addressed postage paid envelope. This has been done for the past five years for management plans (Graph 7.1-3) and services (Graph 7.1-2). Survey information for the past six years is available for forest seedling customers (Graph 7.1-1).

3.5 *How do you build positive relationships with customers and stakeholders?*

Complaints are recorded and promptly investigated to determine all problems and to attempt to alleviate them quickly.

The Forestry Commission meets with state forest user groups on a timely basis to discuss and plan for future opportunities on Forestry Commission owned land that is used for various recreational purposes.

The Forestry Commission makes timely responses to state legislators when our elected officials seek input.

The Forestry Commission's Wildland Urban Interface Program reaches out to community planners and developers, residents and business owners in the state's ever-expanding wildland urban interfaces. This is a hazard mitigation and education program to help these customers reduce risks to their communities as well as their lives and property.

The Forestry Commission reaches educators, young people, and other interested citizens with exhibits and interpretive signage on Harbison State Forest. The agency cooperates with other natural resources agencies and organizations as well as forest industry to provide two popular forestry education programs. The Wood Magic Forest Fair is an award-winning, weeklong program on the benefits of forests and forestry offered to 4th grade classes statewide. The SC Teacher's Tour is offered for graduate credit during the summer. (Graph 7.2-10)

CATEGORY 4 – INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 How do you decide which operations, processes and systems to measure for tracking financial and operational performance?

Historically, measures have been used to monitor program accomplishments. Output measures were commonly used as a gauge of our activity levels. The agency's performance measurement system is constantly evolving and improving. More recently however, new measures have been developed based on their importance to the overall success of our agency. The SCFC has continued to strengthen its focus on the improvement of efficiency, effectiveness, quality and outcome measures.

We continue to design measures linked directly to our mission and the objectives outlined in our strategic plan. Senior management determines which measures should be developed for internal use, and which measures will be reported on an annual basis.

4.2 What are your key measures?

Customer Satisfaction

- Customer Satisfaction Level for Seedling Production (Graph 7.1-1)
- Customer Satisfaction with Forestry Services (Graph 7.1-2)
- Customer Satisfaction with Forest Management Plans (Graph 7.1-3)

Enhance the Resource

- Forest-Based Economic Development Impact (Graph 7.2-1)
- Forest Inventory and Analysis Productivity (Graph 7.2-2)

Protect the Resource

- Fire Response Time in Minutes (Graph 7.2-3)
- Average Fire Size (Graph 7.2-4)
- Timber Theft and Fraud Cases (Graph 7.2-5)
- Five Year Average of Fires, Extended Investigations, and Prosecutions (Graph 7.2-6)
- BMP Compliance Trends (Graph 7.2-7)
- SPB Losses (Graph 7.2-8)
- SPB Salvage (Graph 7.2-9)

Raise Awareness about the Resources

- Teacher Participation and Demand (Graph 7.2-10)

Employee Satisfaction, Involvement, and Development

- Employee Turnover Rate (Graph 7.4-1)
- Six Year Turnover Among Fire Wardens (Graph 7.4-2)
- Physical Fitness Program Participation (Graph 7.4-3)

Regulatory/Legal Compliance and Citizenship

- Appropriations – State General Funds (Graph 7.3-1)
- Agency Operating Funds from State General Funds (Graph 7.3-2)
- Voucher Transactions as a Result of Visa Card Usage (Graph 7.3-3)
- 1-800 Charges per 10,000 Calls Received (Graph 7.3-5)

4.3 *How do you ensure data integrity, timeliness, accuracy, security and availability for decision making?*

Measures and data have been used during program reviews at the area/unit and state levels. Senior management has instructed regional foresters and division directors to begin sharing performance data with personnel at all levels as a means of improving processes and generating feedback.

We are updating our Computer Assisted Dispatch System to improve data collection and analysis.

We undergo annual audits of financial records and processes. An internal auditor reviews data collection processes on an ongoing basis.

4.4 *How do you use data/information analysis to provide effective support for decision making?*

Each delivery process and each support process has its own set of measures. These measures are used to determine process efficiency and effectiveness. The agency has overall measures of effectiveness, such as, customer satisfaction, turnover rate, and financial reports. Decision-makers at all levels will have access to performance measures and are expected to factor that information into their thinking and decisions.

4.5 *How do you select and use comparative data and information?*

Comparative data from similar state forestry organizations is available on a limited basis. However, we strive to get the best comparative data available. Each state records data differently. Contacts made with southeastern states reveal that most state forestry organizations are just beginning to track meaningful performance measures. South Carolina is the only southeastern state which tracks dispatch response times through a statewide real time computer aided dispatch system. The Southern Group of State Foresters has adopted the moderate level work capacity test as the standard to measure wildland firefighter physical fitness.

4.6 *How do you manage organizational knowledge to accomplish the collection and transfer and maintenance of accumulated employee knowledge, and identification and sharing of best practices?*

Succession plans have been developed in key program areas to capture organizational knowledge. Fire Reviews are conducted annually to transfer knowledge learned on individual fires to others within the agency. A cross-functional team, with rotating leadership, prepared the agency's accountability report.

CATEGORY 5 – HUMAN RESOURCES FOCUS

5.1 *How do you and your managers/supervisors encourage and motivate employees (formally and/or informally) to develop and utilize their full potential?*

The Forestry Commission encourages, arranges, and enables employees to obtain the State's Certified Public Manager Award (CPM) and to participate in the South Carolina Executive Institute to help them be more effective supervisors and better prepare them for promotional opportunities.

Although budget cuts have required the suspension and/or curtailment of our performance pay and bonus programs, we will strive to continue to reward outstanding employee performance. We consider this financial recognition incentive to be a high priority.

We also plan to recognize those employees who take on additional duties and responsibilities as a result of budget changes and then perform well. We believe that as we downsize and adjust to doing more with less it is very important to reward those employees who do more than their share of work.

We encourage supervisors to nominate their employees for the above type of rewards and we believe that these programs have a positive effect on employees throughout the organization.

Tuition assistance is available in our agency and is viewed as a win-win situation for employees to expand their educational opportunities as well as help provide increased levels of expertise for the agency.

We involve employees in our strategic planning processes. During plan development and revision, data and information were collected and shared at area/unit level meetings throughout the agency. Representatives from all areas of the organization participated in refining information for the plan.

Although inability to fill vacancies has temporarily precluded recruitment efforts, recruiting for new foresters is generally conducted at various forestry schools in the southeast with onsite interviews and screenings, looking for bright energetic candidates with knowledge and skills to develop into future leaders of the organization. We value promoting from within to fill the majority of our supervisory and upper management positions and have been very successful doing so over the years through these recruiting efforts.

Structured career paths providing for advancement opportunities, additional skills and knowledge gained through training, and salary increases are available for many of our job classifications.

5.2 *How do you identify and address key developmental training needs, including job skills training, performance excellence training, diversity training, management/leadership development, new employee orientation and safety training?*

Identification of training needs is done by asking program managers to stay current on all required training and new techniques and technologies affecting their programs and requesting appropriate training. A training council meets quarterly to review training needs and has developed training guides to set minimum training requirements by job position. The training director constantly looks at training opportunities and insures that all personnel meet required training. Affirmative action training is provided each year to all supervisors authorized to hire.

5.3 *How does your employee performance management system, including feedback to and from employees, support high performance?*

Our Employee Performance Management System uses a universal review date of January 1, which allows supervisors to emphasize strategic plan action items for employees during the calendar year. Position descriptions have been revised to reflect strategic plan objectives for selected positions and for positions that were changed due to FY 02-03 restructuring.

5.4 *What formal and/or informal assessment methods and measures do you use to determine employee well being, satisfaction, and motivation?*

Employees are surveyed periodically for input on issues and areas needing improvement, such as planning conferences and development/updating of strategic plan action items. The SCFC was the first state agency to conduct a Malcolm Baldrige Self-Assessment in 1997, as well as the first state agency to conduct a follow-up Baldrige Self-Assessment which was completed in August 2002. Employee input is obtained through established training and safety committees.

5.5 *How do you maintain a safe, secure, and healthy work environment? (Include your workplace preparedness for emergencies and disasters.)*

Maintaining a safe and healthy work environment is accomplished by stressing safety in all aspects of the agency. Safety training such as defensive driving, forklift operations, use of fire shelters and first aid training is required of certain positions. The safety coordinator looks at all accident reports to recommend ways to avoid similar accidents in the future. Safety inspections of facilities and operations are ongoing and other agency personnel with special expertise are involved where needed. Employees are encouraged to participate in health screenings and health fairs. Some facilities have an evacuation plan. Work is underway to insure that all facilities have such a plan. Facilities that do allow public access have audible alarms on the doors away from the main reception area where needed. Dispatch Centers that do not require public access are kept locked especially after business hours for security of the dispatchers. Exterior door locks have been replaced with keyless entry systems to improve security with personnel turnover. Dispatch Centers have their windows boarded up during major storm events and are equipped with emergency backup power and communications systems. Transportation in four wheel drive vehicles is made available to dispatchers during severe weather events.

The Southern Group of State Foresters has adopted the moderate level work capacity test (walking 2 miles with a 25-lb. pack in 30 minutes or less) as the standard to measure wildland firefighter physical fitness. Several states have begun implementation of physical fitness programs to reach this goal. The SCFC is involved with this effort. Participation in the Physical Fitness Program is required for all fireline employees and for those that volunteer to assist with fireline duties. (Graph 7.4-3)

5.6 *What activities are employees involved with that make a positive contribution to the community?*

We conduct annual fund drives for United Way, Good Health Appeal, United Black Fund, and the Salvation Army. Our agency employees actively serve on interagency, community and municipal advisory boards and participate in numerous community programs such as Palmetto Pride, volunteer fire departments, career days at schools, Camp Kemo, fishing rodeos, state & county fairs, state forests and state parks events, as well as festivals in towns, cities, and communities. Agency employees also participate in fundraising activities for charitable organizations such as MS and American Cancer Society.

CATEGORY 6 – PROCESS MANAGEMENT

6.1 *What are your key processes that produce, create or add value for your customers and your organization, and how do they contribute to success?*

The agency offers products and services to forest landowners and the general public in five key areas: forest protection, forest management, state forests, seedling production, and forestry education.

Forest Protection

The SCFC provides landowners with wildland firefighting assistance through a network of firefighters and equipment stationed throughout the state. Dispatching the closest firefighting unit is a key process in protecting the forest resource. The agency has three dispatch centers located in Newberry, Florence, and Walterboro. These centers operate using a Computer Aided Dispatch System (CADS). A Statewide Dispatch Operations Coordinator was created to provide operational and technical oversight of the dispatch centers. At this level, detailed and independent analyses of key success criteria are performed annually to facilitate consistency. Field personnel are provided with the tools to monitor their own activities. Reports with information such as response time are distributed to supervisors monthly.

The Computer Aided Dispatch System (CADS) is currently being upgraded due to the improved technology available, which will enhance our dispatch efforts and improve our response times in responding to wildland fire incidents. This technology will provide us with state-of-the-art dispatching capabilities that will make us unique throughout the nation. Such improved dispatch operations will help reduce the losses of life, property and our natural resources to wildland fires.

The SCFC, with funding from the National Fire Plan, is designating communities-at-risk of wildfire in the state and conducting wildfire risk assessments for the communities. These assessments provide homeowners, community planners, Fire Departments, and SCFC wildland firefighters with mitigation actions to reduce the wildfire hazard. Communities that take actions to reduce the risk of wildfires become eligible to receive national recognition as a “Firewise Community USA”.

The SCFC administers National Fire Plan Volunteer Fire Assistance grant funds to assist Fire Departments, in purchasing wildland fire fighting equipment, communication equipment, and personal protective equipment and to provide training for fighting fires in the Wildland Urban Interface. This cooperative effort between the SCFC and Fire Departments is critical in achieving success in reducing losses to life, property, and our natural resources.

The SCFC also administers the process of accepting notification of outdoor burning. Forestry, agriculture, and wildlife burning notifications are received by the regional dispatch centers. All other notifications for outdoor burning, including construction debris, right-of-way debris, trade waste and yard debris, are received by an automated voice mail system. This system is an efficient way to process large numbers of calls (400,000+ per year) in a timely fashion and to deliver a consistent fire safety message to the burner. (Graph 7.3-4 & 7.3-5)

New technology for detection of forest pests is constantly being evaluated. An example of technological advance is the use of the Global Positioning System in conducting aerial surveys. By using a preprogrammed GPS, the SCFC was able to eliminate the need for one of three personnel required for the survey. The use of GPS technology also cut the time required for each survey by providing the aircraft pilot a constant and continuous flight track throughout the survey.

Forest Management

The SCFC provides forest landowners with assistance in managing their forestland. This involves a wide range of services including the development of management plans, the monitoring of environmental guidelines, and the re-inventory of South Carolina's forests. Previously, one fourth of the agency's 12 operational areas were reviewed annually. This review process has since been revised to include additional mission areas; however, the revised process has not been implemented due to internal reorganization. Also, customer surveys are mailed to recipients of forest services or management plans. (Graph 7.1-2 & 7.1-3) Different processes are utilized to distribute the surveys. The response rate for management plan surveys improved substantially for FY 03-04. Adjustments made in the distribution process were successful. Compliance with agency-approved environmental guidelines is monitored biannually on federal, state, industrial and private forest ownerships. Results are published and widely distributed in hard copy and over the Internet. A key activity of the SCFC is the re-inventory of the state's forestland. Four two-person crews are measuring plots to exacting national standards. The US Forest Service is required to check a minimum of 5% of our plot work to ensure quality control. (Graph 7.2-2)

State Forests

The SCFC's State Forests demonstrate sustainable multiple-use management to forest landowners and the general public. In FY 00-01, the State Forests began developing a long-range plan to address the primary uses of the State Forests. The plan was completed in June 2002 and approved by the Commissioners, with implementation well underway.

In FY 03-04, a major step in implementation was initiated - a Request for Proposal was prepared to acquire technology to implement a forest inventory and modeling system and establish a central location for compilation and storage of data. This system will enable the agency to greatly improve harvest scheduling, forest-wide planning, program budgeting and other essential functions. Contract award will occur early in FY 04-05 and system initiation is planned for February 2005.

Local recreation advisory groups continue to provide assistance in implementing our recreation plans on state forests.

Seedling Production

The Nursery and Tree Improvement Section of the SCFC supplies forest landowners in South Carolina with high-quality forest tree seedlings. Approximately 12.5 million seedlings were produced during FY 03-04. A 10% customer survey is implemented annually as a feedback mechanism to direct future product design. Ninety-six percent of those responding are satisfied with the overall quality of the products and services provided by the Nursery and Tree Improvement Section of the Commission (Graph 7.1-1). In response to our survey, we learned that:

- Customers are satisfied with our current product mix.
- Customers are pleased with shipping of products.
- Need for more variety and smaller units is being met.

Also, an annual financial analysis is completed to adjust seedling production and price. This analysis is critical as the SCFC nursery program is supported by the sale of seedlings and seed.

In spring 2003, the Nursery and Tree Improvement program applied for a US Forest Service grant in order to do a thorough review of three aspects of our program: the possible consolidation of Creech and Taylor nurseries, our seedling distribution system, and alternative management strategies for Niederhof Seed Orchard. These recommendations are being implemented in FY 03-04 and FY 04-05.

Forestry Education

One of SCFC's primary missions has always been to promote an awareness and appreciation by the public of the ecological, social and economic functions and benefits of the state's forests. The agency's Environmental Education Program has been decimated by budget cuts and loss of dedicated personnel due to retirements and internal restructuring. However, Forestry Commission employees on the state forests and in the Education & Information Technology Division support the agency's popular Wood Magic and Teachers' Tour programs and produce technical and general informational materials on forestry and forest-related subjects. With fewer staff available for direct classroom instruction, educators in grades K-12 have become focal points for professional development training so they can take information back to their classrooms and impart this knowledge to their students. SCFC has led the field in correlating educational training and programs to the SC Department of Education's Curriculum Standards in order to stay current with changing educational reforms. All programs and training are content oriented and standards-based to ensure that they meet the requirements of the State Department of Education (SDE). New technologies such as computer based and web based educational programs are used whenever possible. Partnerships have been formed with federal and state agencies as well as industries to provide our remaining educational programs at an economical cost.

All educational programs offered by SCFC are evaluated and adjusted to meet perceived needs. The demand for these quality programs exceeds SCFC's ability to accommodate them. (Graph 7.2-10)

6.2 *How do you incorporate organizational knowledge, new technology, changing customer and mission-related requirements, cost controls, and other efficiency and effectiveness factors into process design and delivery?*

A new computer aided dispatch system is being installed containing features, functions and enhancements outlined in a request for proposals that incorporated suggestions and recommendations from dispatchers, fire managers, and information technology professionals. An "off-the-shelf" solution was selected over a custom developed system to control costs and to utilize technology and functions developed for 911 systems. Enhancements utilizing the power of GIS software will improve the efficiency in taking Smoke Management Burn Notifications, locating wildfires, and identifying and notifying the closest available resources to an incident.

In recent years the SC Forestry Commission has gone through numerous changes. Some of these changes have caused a lessening of our ability to provide services due to a decrease in staffing levels. During these years of change the agency's leadership has continued to seek ways of becoming more efficient and effective. We have an ongoing process that surveys SCFC customers regarding our performance. (Graph 7.1-1, 7.1-2, 7.1-3) We have improved our web site so that our citizens can attain information and maintain contact with us. We have continued to develop and conduct an extensive training program for our employees. Our aim is to seamlessly weave new technologies and improved employee performance into a tightly integrated system to deliver the best possible service to the people of South Carolina.

6.3 *How does your day-to-day operation of key production/delivery processes ensure meeting key performance requirements?*

Forest Protection

A contract for a new computer aided dispatch system (CADS) was awarded to improve efficiency and consistency. Design and implementation are in progress. The new CADS will provide for automating the determination of compliance with Smoke Management Guidelines when taking burn notifications. This should reduce the process time and increase the accuracy in complying with state regulations. Several key processes for dispatching resources to wildfires will also be automated or improved to help reduce overall response times. The new system will also allow for the incorporation of technology for providing automatic vehicle location to aid in response time and safety of agency employees. Recent downsizing of the agency due to budget cuts has required the integration of historically non-fire SCFC employees into both fire fighting duties and fire fighting support roles.

The automated yard debris burning notification system was modified so that all non-smoke management type vegetative debris burning notifications could be directed to that system as of July 1, 2001. It was estimated that this change would redirect approximately 30,000 calls per year from our dispatch centers to the automated system. This reduction in call volume would allow dispatchers to more efficiently handle smoke management notifications, radio communications, and wildfire calls. The automated system was also modified to handle 24 calls simultaneously, which increased its call handling capabilities by 50%. Another benefit of this change was an overall reduction in the average costs per ten thousand calls handled. (Graph 7.3-4)

Forest Management

Customer surveys are sent out following services work or delivery of management plans. (Graph 7.1-3) Responses are returned directly to the regional forester and analyzed with particular attention given to any negative responses. Contacts are made with landowners where possible to review responses and correct any problems with service delivery. In general, statewide programs, such as the Environmental Management and Forest Inventory and Analysis programs, are directly supervised by a Columbia staff forester with specific training in that program area.

The Commission is a major cooperator in the 2005 National Aerial Photography Program, which will acquire 1:40,000 color infrared aerial photography of South Carolina during January and February of 2005. The Commission will work with the Department of Natural Resources and other agencies to convert this photography into Digital Orthophoto Quarter Quads (DOQQs). Field foresters are utilizing desktop mapping and geographical information systems to develop recommendations and maps in the delivery of forest management services to forest landowners.

State Forests

Annual work plans are reviewed by agency management. Forest product sales are reviewed and approved by the agency's nine-member Commission. Federal and state regulatory agencies work closely with the state forests to ensure protection of rare plants and animals.

Seedling Production

Key success criteria are included in Nursery and Tree Improvement facility manager's EPMS rating criteria. Success criteria include measures of seed & seedling quality as well as protection of the productive capability of the nursery soil. There is technical oversight by staff at the Auburn & NC State University Cooperatives, of which the SCFC is a member. Internally, agency staff reviews seedling production periodically.

During FY 03-04, second generation loblolly cones were collected and sold from our seed orchard and seed processed for our own use. Other species were also collected and processed to meet our needs.

Forestry Education

Individual evaluation by participants is a key component of all SCFC educational programs, including professional development programs such as Project Learning Tree and the SC Teachers Tour. Program changes are constantly being considered and made based on these participant evaluations.

Pre- and post-test are given to participants in the Wood Magic Forest Fair to evaluate program effectiveness. The program has consistently shown significant increases between these test scores. Fourth grade teachers are sent pre-visit materials as well as post-visit materials and lessons to enhance the content of the Wood Magic program.

In general, there is an overwhelming demand for SCFC forestry education programs. (Graph 7.2-10)

6.4 *What are your key support processes, and how do you improve and update these processes to achieve better performance?*

Information Technology

Most aspects of our business involve technology and information management. We have established a presence on the Internet as a means to disseminate information. Internet sales of State Forest recreational permits and Nursery and Tree Improvement seedlings are being explored.

The Information Systems group is responsible directly and indirectly for the maintenance and support of the agency's wide area network, 10 Windows NT Servers, and over 200 computer users and their software applications. During FY 03-04 a major effort began to migrate all computers and servers from Microsoft Windows NT 4.0 operating system and upgrade computers and software to meet the State CIO's South Carolina Enterprise Architecture standards. A goal was established to reduce the agency's replacement cycle for computers from 5-7 years to 3-4 years.

A GIS Manager was hired in FY 03-04 to improve and implement new processes in decision making utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology and spatial data. Using a National Fire Plan grant, a Fire Risk Assessment model is being created to help identify high fire risk areas of the state on a daily basis. A Smoke Model developed by the US Forest Service is being tested to improve prediction capabilities to mitigate the impact smoke from prescribed burns and wildfires may have on major highways. The goal is to reduce or eliminate highway fatalities due to smoke.

Training Programs

Fire training is a key internal activity specific to the South Carolina Forestry Commission due to our emergency response mission. We also require employees to attend training in human resource management areas such as Equal Employment Opportunity training, recruiting and hiring practices, and supervisory skills. The Training Council serves as an advisory board to review training policy and procedures and develop training schedules based on needs submitted from employees, supervisors, and program managers.

Mandatory training guidelines have been developed and implemented for major job categories within the Commission. Specialized training is also provided to meet regulations imposed by other agencies such as OSHA, SFM, DHEC etc. Continuing education is provided to keep employees current with emerging technology.

During FY 03-04, 154 training sessions were held to better equip our personnel in performing their jobs. Training is also provided for external customers. Twenty-four training sessions were held for Fire Management, with 506 non-SCFC personnel in attendance. Three Certified Prescribed Fire Manager courses were held with 76 in attendance. The majority was non-SCFC personnel.

As a leader in the use of the Incident Command System in South Carolina, the SCFC has been asked to provide Incident Command System training to all of the State Law Enforcement Division's sworn officers.

Accounting Department

Our accounting department has received five successive audits by the State Auditors Office with no findings. We continue to monitor and improve our processes and procedures with internal audits and existing staff. The number of voucher transactions has been reduced over the past 8 years as a result of using the Visa card program. This has helped reduce the need for 1 FTE (Graph 7.3-3).

6.5 *How do you manage and support your key supplier/contractor/partner interactions and processes to improve performance?*

US Forest Service Cooperative Funding

We are the primary partner for the US Forest Service in South Carolina in implementing forestry-related programs. Federal funds are allocated to key SCFC state partners based primarily on funding levels and project prioritization by SCFC-led coordinating committees. SCFC routinely participates in USFS sponsored meetings regarding grant allocation procedures and tracking.

Air Operations

The Forestry Commission has two sources for early detection of wildfire: fires called in to dispatch centers by the public and aircraft detection. Aircraft detection services are provided by both contract pilots and aircraft and by aircraft on loan from the federal government flown by South Carolina Forestry Commission pilots. Contract pilots are SCFC trained to detect and report location, size, and woodlands involved in a wildfire to dispatch centers that dispatch fire suppression resources to the fire. In addition to detection, South Carolina Forestry Commission pilots and aircraft are used in the fire suppression effort to assist ground crews and equipment with information needed to suppress the fire in a safe and efficient manner. Close coordination among agency pilots and contractors is required to operate efficiently.

The SCFC is partnering with the SC Army National Guard to provide Blackhawk Helicopters to fly SCFC 750 gallon Bambi Buckets on wildfires that threaten life and property. In addition, the SCFC has a similar agreement with the Greenville County Sheriff's Department for their UH-1 Huey Helicopter to fly a SCFC 324 gallon Bambi Bucket on wildfires in the upstate. Meetings with these partners to update/review memorandums of understanding and operating procedures are conducted annually.

Fire Suppression Equipment

Our Equipment Program Manager works closely with fire suppression equipment dealers and factory representatives to stay abreast of new designs and technology. The equipment program produces specifications to receive bids on equipment and provides design and fabrication capability to the field organization. Equipment specifications are updated as state-of-the-art technology changes, such as the development of hydrostatic transmissions. Equipment maintenance, warranty issues, inventory, cost effectiveness and replacement scheduling are also responsibilities of the program which in turn provides information as needed to equipment manufacturers and other related partners; pre-bid conferences are conducted to review specifications and to respond to vendors' questions. Equipment costs are tracked by software. The Commission utilizes training sessions provided by vendors to stay abreast of changes, participates in vendor demonstrations, and shares information with sister states.

Forest Management

Assistance provided to family forest landowners by the Forestry Commission is very dependent on cooperation from service providers such as tree planters, buyers of forest products, private consulting foresters, and many other professionals. The SC Forestry Commission maintains lists of contractors that provide services to landowners in all parts of South Carolina and provides training for contractors to insure that landowners receive quality service. This training is often provided in cooperation with other natural resource agencies and conservation organizations. The SCFC also periodically meets with other forestry professionals to provide updates on various forestry programs and issues.

University Cooperative Membership

The SCFC stays current with state-of-the-art forestry research through membership in university-based research cooperatives, such as NC State Tree Improvement Cooperative and the Auburn Nursery Cooperative. The collaborative effort and related cost of conducting research is spread over all cooperative members, eliminating redundant efforts and expenses.

The state forester serves on the Clemson University Department of Forestry and Natural Resources Advisory Board; a regional forester and a forest director also serve on advisory boards at Horry-Georgetown Tech and Central Carolina Tech.

CATEGORY 7 – BUSINESS RESULTS

7.1 What are your performance levels and trends for the key measures of customer satisfaction?

In 1998 we began measuring customer satisfaction with our forest tree seedling products. The combined satisfaction levels have consistently remained in the 90%+ range as illustrated in Graph 7.1-1. In FY 04, 96% of surveyed customers responded that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of the products and services provided by the Nursery and Tree Improvement Section of the Commission. We routinely review comments on returned surveys looking for ways to improve our product and delivery systems.

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In 1999 we began measuring customer satisfaction levels with our forestry services and our technical forest management assistance. Graphs 7.1-2 and 7.1-3 illustrate our overall satisfaction levels. Our immediate goal is to improve our forestry services to the 95% satisfaction level. We feel this is a very reasonable and attainable goal.

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7.2 What are your performance levels and trends for the key measures of mission accomplishment and organizational effectiveness?

Enhance the Resource

Forest industry development and investment increased significantly in spring 2004 with two major corporate announcements. Kimberly-Clark Corp. in Aiken County announced a \$200 million investment that will result in 200 new jobs over the next decade. Kimberly-Clark has made tissue and paper products in Aiken County for over 40 years. Kronotex USA Inc. began construction in April 2004 on a \$100 million melamine laminated flooring plant that will employ up to 160 individuals in the Barnwell area. Agency personnel worked on 12 additional projects during the fiscal year that may eventually lead to industry expansion or new development.

A major emphasis during this past fiscal year was the promotion of woody biomass as a renewable energy source in South Carolina. Two utilities have shown interest in utilizing biomass as a replacement energy source for coal. The Strom Thurmond Institute at Clemson University was funded to develop and publish a report on the “Potential for Biomass Energy Development in South Carolina.” The report is due out fall 2004.

In addition to the Strom Thurmond Institute biomass project, the SCFC utilized USDA Forest Service grants to fund six university-based projects. Three of these projects were concluded during the fiscal year: (1) a wood residue inventory by USC, (2) a small diameter biomass analysis for the Edisto River Basin by USC, and (3) a statewide economic development report, developed by Clemson, that discusses the key factors used by forest products companies to locate new facilities.

During the 2004 fiscal year, the SCFC Resource Development Division represented the agency and forestry community through ten statewide and regional economic development organizations. New forest inventory data was drafted for “The State of South Carolina’s

Forests” report which is due out by fall 2004. A SC forest landowner survey was completed to identify landowner trends and the results were published in two professional journals. The SCFC has also taken a lead role in the SC Competitiveness Initiative representing the forestry clusters. Finally, 50 individual business assists were made to address single-issue requests.

In fiscal year 2004, the Forestry Commission's Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program completed 815 FIA plots. The FIA program is currently 45% completed with the 9th survey of the State as illustrated in Graph 7.2-2.

The FIA program is currently fully staffed with four two-person crews located across the State. If funding and staffing remain constant, expected completion of the 9th survey is March of 2007. Data for the 9th survey will be available online by the end of 2007.

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Protect the Resource

Response time to wildland fires is dependent upon many factors, some of which are beyond our control, such as traffic congestion and budget related staffing levels. We refer to fire response time as the time from when we receive the first report of a wildfire until the time our fire warden arrives on the scene.

Internally we measure the different segments of response time and strive to improve each segment with a goal of reducing overall response time to 30 minutes or less at full staffing levels. Graph 7.2-3 illustrates that our average response time has decreased from FY 02-03 to FY 03-04 by 6.0% from 35.7 minutes to 33.57 minutes. Since we are currently not operating at full staffing levels we have had to realign our workforce in order to respond in a timely manner. As seen by this year's figures we have been successful in reducing our response time but still have not yet met our goal of 30 minutes primarily due to past budget cuts and reductions in staffing.

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The Forestry Commission measures and compares the average fire size on state and private lands with twelve additional southern states. The 10-year average fire size is 18.9 acres per fire for the thirteen southern states. South Carolina has the third lowest 10-year average fire size with 5.8 acres per fire as shown in Graph 7.2-4.

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The Forestry Commission has 36 commissioned officers including 4 full time investigators trained and experienced in arson, forest product theft and fraud, and related crime investigations. During the year, investigators cleared 283-timber theft and related cases involving timber valued at \$1,781,472. (Graph 7.2-5) In addition 46 cases valued at approximately \$300,000 were pending court or pleas at the end of the year.

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One of the most effective methods of preventing wildland fires is to investigate every fire and prosecute law violators. (Graph 7.2-6) Our forest wardens are the first line of defense, conducting preliminary cause and origin determination on fires they suppress. If there is a violation or need for further investigation, a Forestry Commission officer or investigator is called in to conduct a more extensive investigation and make charges if warranted.

Over the last five years officers have averaged conducting extended investigations on approximately 28% of fires, and 35% of fires investigated resulted in prosecutions. In FY 04 officers conducted investigations on 32% of fires, and 42% resulted in prosecutions. All but 4 of our officers have multiple duties involving fire suppression, forest management, and law enforcement. Our goal is to increase the number of extended investigations on fires to 50% and increase prosecutions to 50% of extended investigations.

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Graph 7.2-7 shows compliance with harvesting Best Management Practices from previous surveys. Compliance for harvesting BMPs was 84.5% in 1991, 84.7% in 1993, and 89.5% in 1994, 91.5% in 1997. In the fall of 2001, two hundred sites were located and inspected for compliance with BMPs relating to timber harvesting throughout the state. Compliance with harvesting BMPs rose to 94% in the initial phase of this two-year study. In the winter of 2002, site preparation BMPs were evaluated on the same 200 sites and an additional 100 site prepared tracts. A third and final site visit to each monitoring location was conducted in early 2003 to determine site preparation BMP compliance, regeneration methods, site stabilization, conversion to other uses, and other related factors. Compliance with BMPs for site preparation fell slightly to 96.4%. In the spring of 2004, the BMP foresters initiated a new round of monitoring on 200 sites. Field data is currently being collected at these sites, and this data will be used to update compliance figures for the implementation of BMPs related to timber harvesting.

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The SCFC is charged by law with the detection, evaluation and suppression of insect and disease pests on forestlands in South Carolina. During Southern Pine Beetle (SPB) outbreaks we survey all forest properties within the designated outbreak zone. Individual infestations are located during these aerial surveys and ownership of affected areas is determined. Landowners with detected beetle spots are then notified of their problem and offered advice and assistance in controlling their insect infestation. The Insect & Disease staff and other agency personnel accomplish surveys and landowner notifications. Southern Pine Beetle activity declined significantly during the year; however, surveys revealed an approximately 70% salvage rate of SPB damaged timber. (Graph 7.2-8 & 7.2-9)

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Raise Awareness about the Resource

The Forestry Commission strives to reach South Carolina's school children through "train the trainer" programs for teachers such as Project Learning Tree (PLT) and the annual S.C. Teachers Tour. The Wood Magic Forest Fair, designed for fourth graders, also equips teachers to explore such topics as sustainable forestry and recycling. Each of these programs meets the state's educational requirements for teacher certification and/or classroom instruction.

In recent years, interest in and applications for both the Teachers Tour and the Forest Fair have exceeded the number of programs we were able to offer. The primary limiting factor is the growing scarcity of qualified instructors due to SCFC and cooperator staff reductions.

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7.3 *What are your performance levels for the key measures of financial performance?*

The Forestry Commission's recurring State Appropriated funds have been cut from \$19,742,565 in FY 01-02 to \$12,191,858 in FY 04-05 (Graph 7.3.1). Additional losses of carry forward and other funds bring the SCFC's total reduction to over \$8 million. With the majority of state appropriated funds being used for salaries and benefits, the agency has had a corresponding reduction in its workforce, and now carries a 28% vacancy factor (Section II, 1 and 3).

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Agency operating funds from state general funds also have been reduced significantly (Graph 7.3-2). Operating budgets for protection services now are funded primarily with short-term federal grants and revenue earned from forestry services.

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The number of voucher transactions has been reduced over the past 8 years as a result of using the Visa card program. This has helped reduce the need for 1 FTE. (Graph 7.3-3).

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In FY 02, the Forestry Commission began routing all burning notifications, except those for forestry, wildlife and agricultural purposes, to an automated notification system. This greatly improved the efficiency of the Forestry Commission in handling these calls, dispatchers handling other calls, and substantial savings in 1-800 charges.

Graph 7.3-4 shows the percent change from the previous fiscal year in the amount of rainfall, number of fires, number of burning notifications, number of 1-800 calls, and charges for those 1-800 calls. By routing all burning notifications except those for forestry, wildlife and agricultural to the automated notification system, the Forestry Commission decreased the charges in 1-800 calls by 20.33% in FY 02 when compared to FY 01. This occurred even when rainfall decreased by 16% and fires increased by 20.7%, 1-800 calls made to the Forestry Commission increased by 12.29%, and only a slight 4.38% decrease in the total number of notifications taken.

An additional 39.96% savings in 1-800 charges was seen in FY 03. Only part of this savings can be attributed to the 22.59% reduction in 1-800 calls due to a decrease in fires and notifications as a result of an increase in rainfall for the year. The rest is due to the improved efficiencies in the handling of these calls with the automated notification system.

FY 04 saw an 11.12% decrease in rainfall and a 93.69% increase in fires compared to FY 03. Burning notifications increased by 20.25% in FY 04 while the automated system handled a 15.9% increase in notifications. These factors increased the number of 1-800 calls to the Forestry Commission by 22.07%, but charges for these calls only increased by 15.87%. The automated notifications system easily handled the increase call volume and allowed dispatchers to more efficiently handle wildfires and smoke management burn notifications.

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The SCFC received an average of over 400,000 burning notifications per year by 1-800 calls during the past four years. In FY 02 the SCFC began routing all burning notifications, except those for forestry, wildfire, and agriculture purposes, to an automated notification system.

This greatly improved the agency's efficiency in handling these calls, as well as in dispatchers handling other calls. Graph 7.3-5 shows that the trend of improved efficiency and effectiveness in handling large volumes of incoming 1-800 calls continued, even with a 22% increase in call volume during FY 04.

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7.4 *What are your performance levels and trends for the key measures of Human Resource Results?*

The SCFC turnover rate in FY 01-02 increased drastically as a direct result of budget related Voluntary Separation Programs and Retirement Incentive Programs implemented in the agency to minimize layoffs. Turnover rates returned to somewhat more traditional agency levels during the past two years. (Graph 7.4-1)

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Forestry Wardens comprise 43% of the total number of agency employees, which constitutes the largest job category of employees. During the period 7/1/98 – 6/30/04, of the 85 Wardens who left employment, 50 retired, which is 59%. Graph 7.4-2 shows the experience level of the 85 who left employment. Not only does Graph 7.4-2 demonstrate the longevity and successful careers of many of our Wardens it also points out the need for extensive recruitment efforts and effective new employee training programs.

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The Southern Group of State Foresters has adopted the moderate level work capacity test (walking 2 miles with a 25-lb. pack in 30 minutes or less) as the standard to measure wildland firefighter physical fitness. Several states have begun implementation of physical fitness programs to reach this goal. The SCFC is involved with this effort.

Participation in the Physical Fitness Program is required for all fireline employees and for those that volunteer to assist with fireline duties. Graph 7.4-3 shows that the total number of employees and number of fireline employees have been significantly reduced due to mandated budget cuts since 2001. It also shows that while the number of employees taking the physical fitness test has decreased, the percentage of employees taking the test and passing has increased from 85% in 2001 to 91% in 2004. This improvement can be attributed to efforts of some employees to improve their physical fitness levels and an emphasis on hiring more physically fit employees.

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During the period from 7/96 to 10/00 a total of 65 employees received performance pay increases or pay bonuses in recognition of outstanding contributions to the agency. Unfortunately, these programs had to be suspended due to the ongoing budget crises. We consider this financial incentive to be a high priority, and have plans to fully reinstate the processes for supervisors to make such recommendations on behalf of their employees as soon as funding permits. In May of this year we honored our commitment of pay increases or bonuses to 75 employees who had waited nearly a year to be recognized for their vastly expanded roles and responsibilities resulting from our major reorganization in July 2003.

The average state service for all state employees is currently 12.25 years, compared to the average state service for Forestry Commission employees of 14.17 years. We continue to

believe this comparison is indicative of our employees enjoying their work and their working environment.

7.5 *What are your performance levels and trends for the key measures of regulatory/legal compliance and community support? Note: For a government agency, this question would apply to compliance with laws and regulations other than the agency's central legal mandate. Results of the agency's legal mandate or mission should be address in question 7.2.*

We are subject to financial audits, Cooperative Forest Management Review by US Forest Service, Federal Aviation Administration inspections and regulations, State Fleet Management inspections, OSHA regulations, and DHEC Smoke Management Guidelines and Outdoor Burning Regulations. We have audits in the areas of accounting, purchasing, insurance, classification, and compensation. They have all been performed without findings of audit exceptions in each of the past five years. Federal funds require compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The USDA Forest Service monitors compliance on a regular basis.